

## MY DAD--A NEW CREATURE IN CHRIST

My Dad was born into this world June 6, 1913 in Coldwater, Tennessee. Coldwater got its name from a spring that bubbled cold water into a creek that winds through the wide spot in the road. "Buster" was the youngest of six children born to Mance and Fannie.

Life was not easy in middle Tennessee. When his father shot and killed himself, Buster, only a baby at the time, was lying next to him in bed. He lived with his brothers, Charlie and Jess, for a while.

At eight years of age, he was practically on his own. A black family that lived closeby welcomed Buster to their house just like he was family. On Friday and Saturday nights he visited and on the front porch of that black sharecropper shack learned to play the harmonica- "french harp", he affectionately called it. He listened as the guitar was played using a broken bottle neck as a slide for the blues.

When he turned thirteen, he took his savings from picking cotton, bought a bicycle, and went to Huntsville, Alabama to work in a sewing mill. The family nickname "Buster" was dropped and "Red" took its place after he left the farm.

He found out he was good at pitching fastpitch softball. It wasn't long until "Red" was well known in Huntsville ballparks. He wasn't just good, *he was outstanding*. Shutouts and no-hitters were standard events when Red pitched. One of the highlights of his sports career was when he pitched against the World Fast Pitch Softball Champions, the Clearwater Bombers out of Clearwater, Florida.

On June 16, 1933, Red married Dorothy May from Monrovia, Alabama, They had three children, all boys. I'm the oldest.

Red worked for a wrecker company, Redstone Arsenal in WW II, and several stove manufacturers. When he retired in 1978, he was a supervisor over several departments at Modern Maid Stove Company in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

I was saved in 1963. The first person I witnessed to was my Dad. He turned my pleading down saying, "Not now." For fifteen years he watched the Lord bless me, my wife, Sue, and our children -and rejected the gospel.

In 1970, Micah was born with severe health problems. Unknowing to us, Dad prayed, "Lord, if you will save that baby's life, I'll get right." God spared Micah in a miraculous way.

For seven years after Micah was born, I was the only preacher Dad would listen to. I started a church in Cleveland, Tennessee. Dad would come to Cleveland every weekend "to see the kids". He also attended church in the YMCA building we rented. It was not too "religious" and more casual than regular church buildings.

One morning, November 14, 1976, Dad showed up at our door. As soon as my wife opened the door, Dad asked, "Do you have a Bible I could use, Suzie?" We almost fainted right there.

God was working on him!

*(It was the first Bible Dad ever owned. He read, studied, and wrote in it, until he wore it out and got another in 1981. I have his first Bible here with me as I write these words. What a blessing it is to see the notes of his own Bible study).*

In 1977, I took the pastorate of Victory Baptist Church in Alabama. When Dad retired in the spring of 1978, he and Mom moved to Alabama and began attending Victory.

I'll never forget Sunday morning, June 16, 1978. At the invitation, Dad stepped out and came forward. I met him as he came. He said, "Bud, I've broke every commandment in the Book. Will God save a sinner like me?" "He sure will, Dad," I beamed, "That's just exactly who He came to save-sinners." My Dad made an amazing statement: "Good enough! Then I'll take the same Jesus you accepted and preach."

After 15 years of God working on him and Dad watching me, he decided to take the same Saviour that saved, changed, and kept me. How glad I am now that *by the grace of God* Dad saw something of Jesus in our lives that did not drive him away from the gospel. I'll never be able to praise the Lord enough for that blessed truth. Here is what Dad wrote in his Bible about that day:

### TO ALL CONCERNED

June 16, 1978 at 11:45AM I made my confession of faith for the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour. This was at Victory Baptist Church in Alabama. This was done publicly before the church. I was baptized at Victory Baptist Church on the same day at 7:45PM. My son (the minister) baptized me.

Thank God.

(Signed)

Dad began to witness and work as soon as he was saved. He became the church janitor and “maintenance engineer”. The Christian school children all knew “Pop”, as they affectionately called him. The teachers and secretaries and staff could depend upon Dad to change lights, unstop commodes, paint rooms, cut grass around the church (he did that for several years) or clean up the building.

Every mission trip we took, Dad always gave me a \$100 bill to “help with the expenses.” Every special project we had at the church, he was always “for it” and usually the first to give to it.

When Mom developed Alzheimer’s Disease Dad took care of her. Open-heart surgery did not slow him down but for a few weeks, and soon he was right back at her side. Mom went home to be with the Lord whom she loved in October of 1993.

After that, we all knew that Dad missed her so much, this old world lost his interest. It lost his allegiance back in 1978, but now he really had lost his interest in staying here. “To depart and to be with Christ which is far better” was a truth, which Dad realized during those days as we have never known it.

Although he was not feeling well, Dad did not return to his heart doctor for a checkup in December.

He played his “french harp” at the church Christmas fellowship in December. The last song I heard him play on the french harp was “Amazing Grace.” Dad went into the presence of God on December 14, 1993.

Truly it is “amazing grace”. My Dad, whom I knew before and after his conversion, was indeed a “new creature”. Old things had passed away and all things had become new in his life.

Dad always liked Christmas. He would make sure we had something even back when he didn’t have money. I think it was because as an orphan, he never had much of anything.

I know this: Dad sure did have a great Christmas in 1993 and it hasn’t stopped! One day I’ll see him again. It seems I hear him say, as he did many times, “Keep on preaching, Bud!”